



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**Dale J Schmidt** Sheriff **Scott Mittelstadt** Chief Deputy

## Jurisdictional Authority

Every month I get calls from citizens who think that as the sheriff I have control over areas that I do not. One of the most common misconceptions is regarding the sheriff's office role vs. a police department's role. Yes, the sheriff's office under the constitution and state statute have law enforcement authority and responsibilities anywhere within the county, including inside all villages, cities and townships. However, those local municipalities who enact a police department as laid out in state statute, primarily handle most police services within those jurisdictions. While we are always available and willing to assist, we generally leave law enforcement within those municipalities to their police agencies. There are a few exceptions when the sheriff's office may step in such as during a conflict of interest situation for that police agency, a specific request by that police agency to handle an incident or to perform other duties of the sheriff as defined by law.

From time to time, a citizen will call me thinking that as the elected Chief Law Enforcement Official (CLEO) of the county, that I have authority over those police agencies. That is simply not the case. The police chiefs of those agencies answer to the officials from those municipalities who appointed them and there is no hierarchy between law enforcement agencies, only within an agency. Similarly, no state law enforcement agency has authority over a sheriff's office or vice versa as the Sheriff answers directly to the people of the county as any other elected official.

Another area of confusion is regarding highways. Again, I get many phone calls asking me what I am going to do about a particular highway, road, street or intersection. I am asked if I can put up stop signs or reconstruct roads. Again, I have no authority over roads or signs and this authority rests with the municipality that controls it.

To help everyone out on this issue, I would like to define who is usually responsible for a particular street or road in Dodge County and who is responsible for design and signage:

**Numbered Highways:** These highways such as 151, 60, 26, or 68 are all state highways and they are controlled by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

**Lettered Highways:** These highways such as A, E, G, AY, or NN are all county highways and the county highway commission is responsible for them.

**Roads with Fire Numbers:** Fire numbers are addresses that start with a W or an N in front of them such as N4100 or W4100. Those address signs will typically have a township name on them. The township in those locations is responsible for these roads.

Streets in Villages and Cities: Streets that fall within a city or village are generally maintained by that city or village. If a state highway runs through that city or village that may change things.

My point in all of this is that when you have a concern in one of these areas, it is important that you contact the correct person to get answers. This simple lesson in civics may help to save you from run around and hassle. We are all here to serve you in one way or another and the sheriff's office will always work to direct you to the correct place, but I thought a little explanation might be helpful.

Thank you again to our community for the support you have shown our local officials. We really appreciate it and it certainly helps as we all work together to keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt